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SIR NIGEL

Continued from page 10

was dotted with the heads of her crew. An English ship had been sunk by a huge stone discharged from an engine, and her men also were struggling in the waves, none having leisure to lend them a hand. A second English ship was caught between two of the Spanish vessels and overwhelmed by a rush of boarders so that not a man of her was left alive. On the other hand, Mowbray and Audley had each taken the carracks which were opposed to them, and the battle in the center, after swaying this way and that, was turning now in favor of the Islanders.

The Black Prince, with the Lion, the Grace Marie and four other ships, had swept round to turn the Spanish flank; but the movement was seen, and the Spaniards had ten ships with which to meet it, one of them their great carrack the Saint Iago di Compostella. To this ship the Prince had attached his little cog and strove desperately to board her; but her side was so high and the defense so desperate that his men could never get beyond her bulwarks, but were hurled down again and again with a clang and clash to the deck beneath. Her side bristled with crossbowmen, who shot straight down on the packed waist of the Lion, so that the dead lay there in heaps. But the most dangerous of all was a swarthy black-bearded giant in the tops, who crouched so that none could see him, but rising every now and then with a huge lump of iron between his hands, hurled it down with such force that nothing would stop it. Again and again these ponderous bolts crashed through the deck and hurtled down into the bottom of the ship, starting the planks and shattering all that came in their way.

The Prince, clad in that dark armor which gave him his name, was directing the attack from the poop when the shipman rushed wildly up to him with fear on his face.

"Sire!" he cried, "the ship may not stand against these blows! A few more will sink her! Already the water floods inboard!"

The Prince looked up, and as he did so the shaggy beard showed once more and two brawny arms swept downward. A great slug, whizzing down, beat a gaping hole in the deck, and fell rending and riving into the hold below.

The master-mariner tore his grizzled hair. "Another leak!" he cried. "I pray to Saint Leonard to bear us up this day! Twenty of my shipmen are baling with buckets; but the water rises on them fast. The vessel may not float another hour."

The Prince had snatched a crossbow from one of his attendants and leveled it at the Spaniard's tops. At the very instant when the seaman stood erect with a fresh bar in his hands, the bolt took him full in the face, and his body fell forward over the parapet, hanging there head downward. A howl of exultation burst from the English at the sight, answered by a wild roar of anger from the Spaniards.

A seaman had run from the Lion's hold and whispered in the ear of the shipman. He turned an ashen face upon the Prince. "It is even as I say, sire. The ship is sinking beneath our feet!" he cried.

"The more need that we should gain another," said he. "Sir Henry Stokes, Sir Thomas Stourton, William, John of Clifton here lies our road! Advance my banner, Thomas de Mohun! On, and the day is ours!"

By a desperate scramble a dozen men, the Prince at their head, gained a footing on the edge of the Spaniard's deck. Some slashed furiously to clear a space, others hung over, clutching the rail with one hand and pulling up their comrades from below. Every instant that they could hold their own their strength increased, till twenty had become thirty and thirty forty, when of a sudden the new-comers, still reaching forth to their comrades below, saw the deck beneath them reel and vanish in a swirling sheet of foam. The Prince's ship had foundered.

A yell went up from the Spaniards as they turned furiously upon the small

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